

Reugene Balentina (25)

STUDY YEAR: 2013–2015

IS: Co-Founder @ Check-It Services

HOME: Apartment in Amsterdam

HOUSEHOLD: In a relationship

DREAM JOB AS KID: Inventor

RIDE: VW Polo



I have always been fascinated about bringing the best products and services to the right customers. Therefore, after finishing my bachelor Business Administration I enthusiastically started both the masters SIM and Marketing. While at first combining two masters seemed challenging, I quickly got the hang of it and even managed to finish Marketing cum laude.

'And now what?', was my first thought after finishing my masters. But then something great happened! Two friends approached me with a great idea and asked me if I wanted to start a business. Seeing fellow students pursuing lucrative careers and family asking if it wouldn't be better to gain experience before starting a business made it difficult to take the risk, but I took it! We started Check-It Services, an online platform where hospitality businesses can track their performance and interact with guests in real-time through a mobile application. We quickly gained momentum and got most of the biggest bars in Groningen as customers. I was confident that we hit the jackpot. We went to potential investors with a solid proof of concept and thought we would easily get the investment needed to roll out our platform nationwide. Well.... that didn't happen. After several attempts and lengthy negotiations with investors, and not being able to secure the resources needed, we were forced to pull out the plug of the company.

Although my business goals were not achieved, I see this experience as a great success and as the best decision I have ever made. I still have a bright future ahead. I have gained experiences that a lot of people dream of. And I never have to ask myself 'what if I would have started this business?' I'm glad I took the gamble. The greatest result of this journey was the discovery of my silent passion: IT and the digital world! It felt euphoric the first time I changed the background color of our company website. Suddenly a discipline I thought was only reserved for a few with years of experience was within reach. Within months I was building websites from scratch, discussing database structures and converting raw data into valuable insights.

Now, with the practical experience and agile mentality of a startup, a broader view on business in general, and my newly found passion for IT and digital innovations, I'm ready and extremely excited to pursue a new challenge in the corporate world.

My advice to SIM students is to follow your passion, take risks and don't be afraid to make mistakes. Even if you fail, you will learn a lot and your dream job will still be there for you to enjoy the next 40 years.

Second, whether you are passionate about IT or not, it is smart to learn at least the basics, since IT is ubiquitous in our modern world, technology-led innovations are booming, and organizations extremely value this quality in young professionals. As we learn in the SIM master, successful innovations are built by collaborating and being able to bridge the gap between business units or businesses: developing IT skills will certainly turn you into a valuable asset for every organization!

Do you want to know more about my experiences? Feel free to contact me via my [LinkedIn page](#).

Dilara Tuna (28)

STUDY YEAR: 2013–2015

IS: Trends Manager @ Emakina/Insights

HOME: Brussels

HOUSEHOLD: Single

DREAM JOB: Professional Horseback Rider

RIDE: B'twin Rockrider 340 (with helmet!)



I always knew I wanted to work in a marketing agency – being fascinated about branding and advertising, brand positioning, and how brands communicate their value proposition to their target audiences. When I started my master in Marketing Management, I realized quickly I wanted to learn more and broaden my knowledge. At that time, I heard about the possibility to combine my master Marketing with SIM.

I immediately noticed the differences between the two Masters in the way of working and in how the two fields look differently at things. These different viewpoints between people with different backgrounds still fascinate me in my current job. I have the privilege to work with creatives, such as designers, UX and UI designers, art directors as well as developers.

After graduating, I travelled with a travel-companion for a few months through Iceland, Canada and down the Westcoast of America. We were both applying for jobs during this trip, which was a bit of challenge in finding fitting time slots with potential employers. We still don't know how we managed, but we were lucky in getting job interviews.

After landing on a Monday night at Schiphol, I had my first job interview the next morning (completely jet-lagged) in Amsterdam. The day after, I had my second interview in Brussels. I got offered both jobs, but took the job in Brussels. I started as a trends and research manager at [Emakina](#), a digital communication agency. Working at a marketing agency does not make you rich, but the work is very interesting and various, having clients from lubricants to luxury jewellery brands. You need to be able to switch quickly from one project to another: one moment you work with creatives, the next moment you brief a developer. You also need to learn how to switch and communicate with the different stakeholders, while being in control and maintaining your cool.

My department is like a start-up; it is a new, independent unit that stimulates the integration of research and insights to develop more effective digital communication strategies. Most of the time, we work on pitches to prove ourselves to our clients. This is important but risky business: we put hours and hours of work in developing creative ideas, not knowing if we will win.

Our department collects consumer insights through qualitative and quantitative research, mystery shopping and observations. I am responsible for "feeding" people with the latest trends and innovations in the industry, which is especially important for account managers who pitch ideas to potential clients. I detect industry trends and link them to consumer behaviour and company needs, such that our agency can develop a grounded digital strategy. You'd be surprised to see how little companies search for industry trends. I make sure they get the insights they need! My guiding question is: "What does the customer want next?" I search for innovations that create new customer needs and that raise their expectations.

Interested in which Belgian beer is the best? Contact me via [LinkedIn!](#)